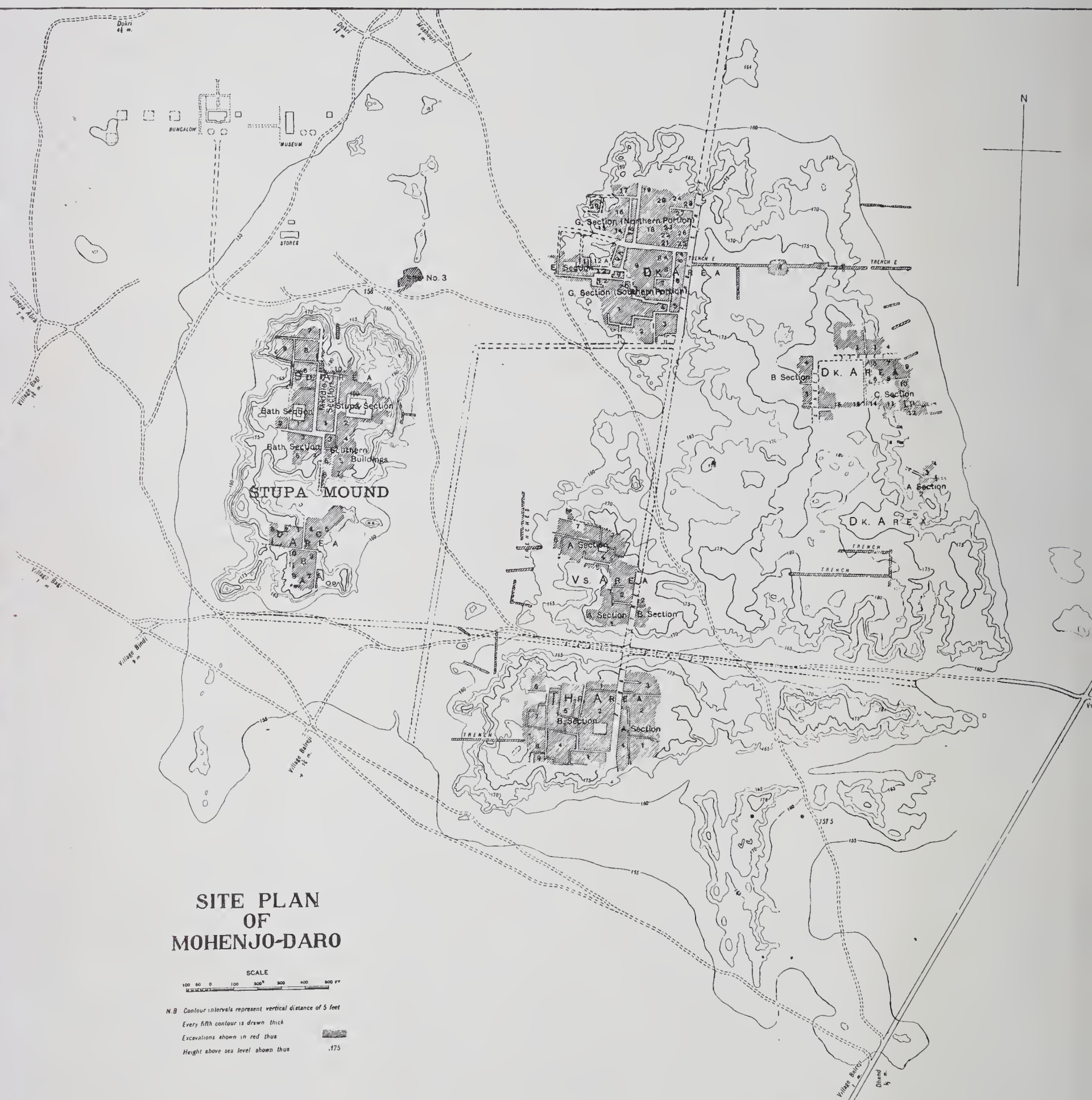


THE GLORY THAT WAS MOHENJODARO

Dr. F.A. KHAN S.I., T.Pk.



BERKELOUW





General View of the citadel area with the Kushana period Stupa in the background

Pakistan which emerged as an independent state on 14th August, 1947 comprises some of the area which were the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. The original inhabitants of the Indo-Pak sub-continent are described in the Vedas as godless, lawless and noseless barbarians of hostile speech who lived in fortified cities and possessed herds of cattle. But in 1920 and in the subsequent years the excavations conducted at the Indus valley sites of Mohenjodaro and Harappa established that a civilization possessing a high standard of art and craftsmanship and a well-developed system of pictographic



A Low Lane in D.K. Area

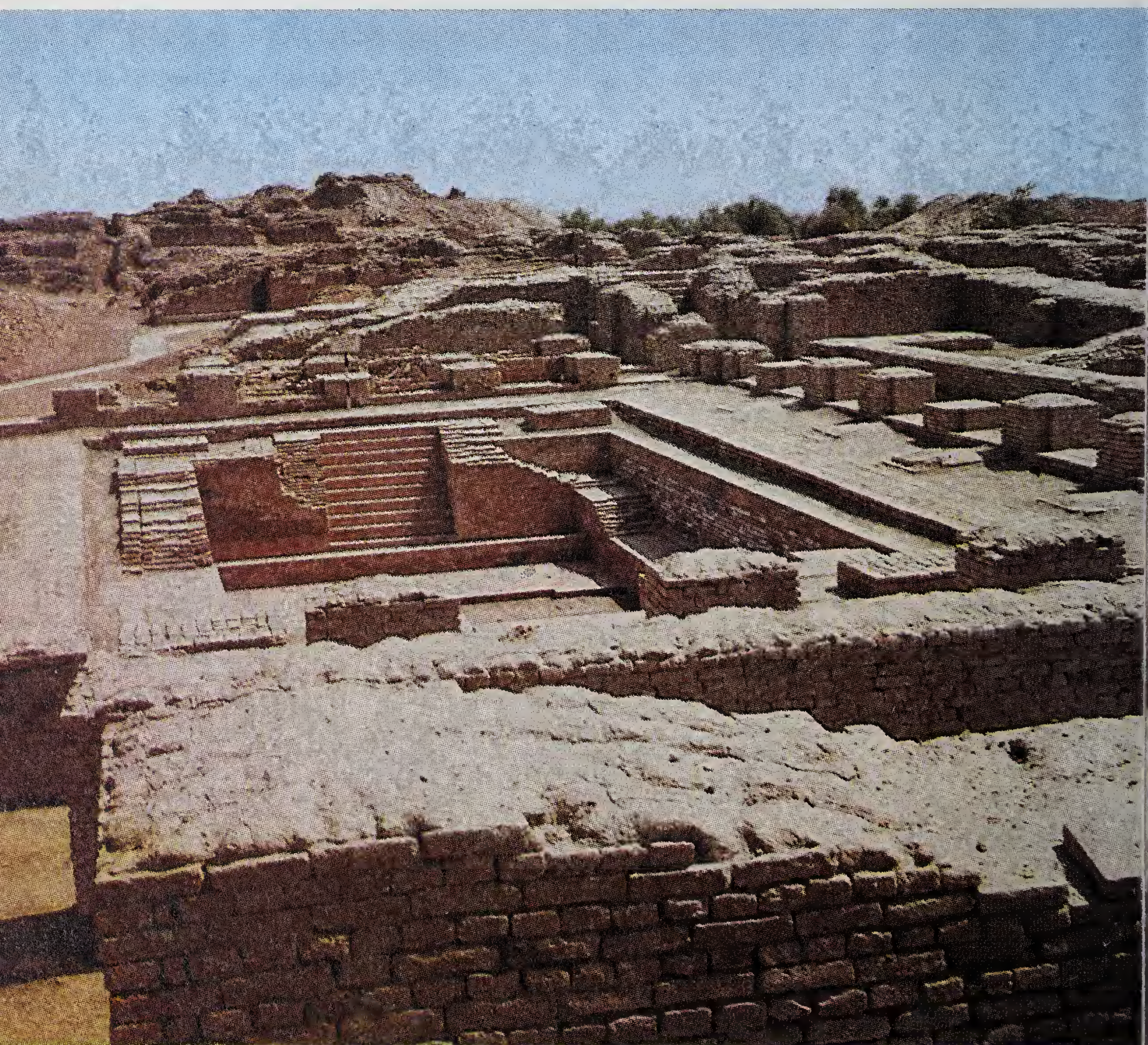
writing had existed about 2250 B.C. in the Indus valley for a considerable period before the arrival of Indo-Aryans. Harappa, Mohenjodaro and other sites of Indus valley have provided very significant archaeological results and given us considerable information about the civilization of the original inhabitants of the sub-continent. This civilization, now designated as Harappa Civilization after the name of the site where its remains were first discovered, belongs to the Bronze Age, because the principal sites of this culture have yielded copper and bronze objects side by side with stone implements and with total absence of iron and ironmade implements. Detailed studies indicated that the Harappa-Mohenjodaro culture was contemporary in part with the Early Dynastic Sumerian civilization.

In antiquity the Indus valley resembled Mesopotamia, Susiana and Egypt in being an alluvial plain watered jointly by the Indus and its five tributaries in the Panjab. But in areas, the Indus valley civilization was more extensive than the civilizations of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, the Karun valley in the south-western province of Khuzistan in Iran or the Nile valley, being roughly 1000 miles in length from north to south and more than 300 miles broad.



Main street

The economy of the cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro was based upon the fertile valleys of the major rivers of the Indus basin and the easy means of communication and transportation which these rivers afforded. As such, agriculture was the main occupation of the people of these regions. There is evidence to show that wheat, barley, sesamum, dates and cotton



The Great Bath



Painted Pottery



Plain Pottery

Copper Utensils





A well inside a house

were cultivated. The farmers depended on the annual rains and floods for the irrigation of their fields. The existence of brick-lined street drains and rain water pipes, the universal use of burnt bricks in construction and the representation of the seals of such animals as the tiger, rhinoceros, elephants and buffaloes which favour moist habitat, show that the Indus valley enjoyed a heavier rainfall in ancient times than at present.

The surplus production and availability of easy means of communication and transport through rivers made it possible for the inhabitants of the valley to barter the crop surplus. This barter or exchange in kind enabled them to import essential raw materials such as metals, semi-precious stones and other miscellaneous commodities from neighbouring countries.

The architecture of the Harappa-Mohenjodaro period is plain and utilitarian. There are neither imposing temples as in Sumer nor royal tombs as at Ur and in Egypt. It seems that the aim of the city builders was to make life comfortable rather than luxurious. The houses are well planned. As we walk through the doors, we get an impression of solid comfort. Drains are hardly romantic, but those at Harappa and Mohenjodaro are among their chief glories. The system is certainly the most elaborate ancient system as yet discovered and might almost be termed 'modern' in character. The most remarkable building at Harappa is the 'Great Granary'; no less striking is the 'Great Bath' at Mohenjodaro. The Granary may well have served the purpose of a public treasury. If this be

Terracotta Toy Chariot





Terracotta vases

Terracotta Toy Figurines



so then there was no currency, and taxes were paid in kind. The 'Great Bath' at Mohenjodaro may have been used for religious or ceremonial bathings, as many of the common dwellings both at Harappa and Mohenjodaro possessed their own bath rooms and wells.

Various objects of art have been found in these ancient cities. There is a large number of burnt clay male and female figurines and models of birds. The female figurines are bedecked with jewellery and pannier-like arrangement on each side of the head; some of the panniers are smoke-stained, and it is possible that oil, or perhaps incense was burnt in them. These figurines are taken to represent the 'Great Mother Goddess', whose cult was also wide-spread in the Near Middle East in ancient times. The few male figurines are always nude and mostly bearded, and they wear long hair at the back. What deity they represent is difficult to say. Both the male and female figurines were modelled by hand and painted light red.

Terracotta female figurine



Terracotta male figurine





Toys

There is a steatite bust of a nobleman or a priest-king wearing a loose robe on which the trefoil pattern is engraved in relief. The trefoil pattern occurs also on the Sumerian 'Bull of Heaven' during the rule of the Gudea dynasty of Ur in about 2200 B.C. and in Egypt in the middle of the second millennium B.C.



Terracotta figurine of Mother Goddess heavily adorned with jewellery



Beads Necklaces

The figural art is best illustrated by steatite seals bearing life-like representations of such animals as the Brahmani Bull, the short-horned bull, buffalo, tiger, the rhinoceros, crocodile, also figures of mythological creatures like the 'unicorn', a human figure with horns and a tail, and a horned tiger. The seals also bear short inscriptions in pictographic script which cannot be read. Some of the scenes depicted on seals give a clue to the religious beliefs of the people.

The plastic art was as well developed as the cutting of the seals. Small dancing girls in bronze show a slim figure with flat negroid features. The rhythmic swing of their bodies is realistically portrayed and the modelling of their back and hips is very effective.



Minor Objects

The 'Unicorn' on the Steatite Seal







Dancing girl

Among ornaments necklaces and pendants of beads of semi-precious stones are most common. Ornaments of faience and paste beads are also fairly popular while those of shell and clay are less frequent. Square disc-shaped etched carnelian beads decorated with white designs have also been found. Beads of similar technique come from Mesopotamia and Iran. These beads undoubtedly provide an evidence of trade in ancient times between the Indus valley and her neighbours towards the west. Such objects are invaluable for dating sites in the Indus valley, Iran and Mesopotamia. Gold necklaces, fillets for head wear, armlets, bangles and finger rings were worn both by men and women while long carnelian beads, ear-rings and anklets exclusively by women.

The chert stone implements are mostly long flakes, evidently used as knives and suitable for cutting meat and vegetables. Their edges have become serrated by long use. Stone vessels are comparatively rare and are more frequently made of alabaster. Most of the vessels are thick and clumsy. A large number of highly polished stone weights made of chert, quartzite, alabaster, limestone and jasper have been discovered. They are mostly cubical but spherical or barrel-shaped have also been found. The system of weighing was binary; the ratio being 1:2:4:8:16:32:64. Very few weights, considering the great number found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, are fraudulent, a fact which suggests the existence of stringent trade regulations.

Head of an old man



Copper and bronze were used for making domestic utensils, implements, statuettes and ornaments. The utensils consist of cooking pots, flat dishes, vases and dishes with covers. The pottery, both plain and painted, are in large variety, highly specialised character being demonstrated by the decoration on the red ware. This attests to an artistic and sophisticated style. The designs consist of geometric devices as well as stylized human, animal and bird forms and vegetation. Of the geometric patterns, the most elaborate and characteristic design is the 'intersecting circle'. Other decorative elements include fish scale pattern and 'pipal' leaf motif. Checker-board design also occurs. Incised and stamped pottery is fairly common. The pottery shows a highly developed technique.

Copper objects





Steatite seals

Who were the people who lived in Harappa and Mohenjodaro? No definite answer can be given to this question, though it is certain that they were of non-Aryan racial stock and highly civilized. Not only do their well-built cities bear witness to this fact but confirmation is also found in various aspects of their religion, which included 'Mother Goddess', tree and animal worship. The skeletal remains unearthed from the Harappa cemetery include four racial types — the Proto-Australoid,



Copper Weapons



Chert Blades, stone implements



Gamesmen

Mediterranean, Alpine and Mongoloid. The first type is represented by skulls which are long. The people of the type were powerfully built and had a tall stature. Skulls of the Mediterranean type are also long. The Harappa population consisted in the man of the second type. The people of this type were of moderate height with long head, narrow prominent nose and long face. The third type belongs to the short-headed group. The fourth type is typically Mongolian.



Weights

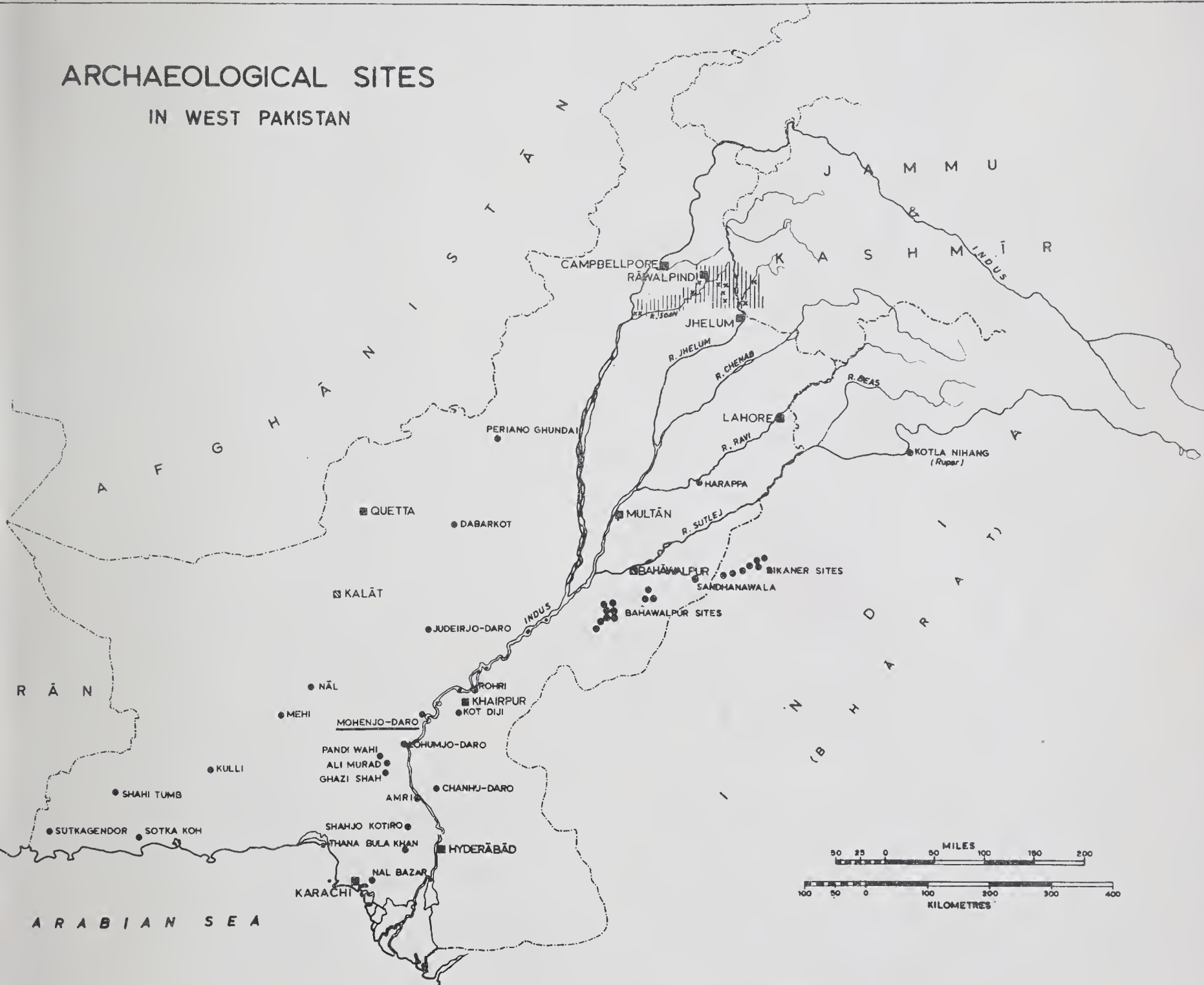
Among the causes for the decay and desertion of the ancient cities of Indus Valley Civilization after 1800 B.C., progressive desiccation of the valley may have been one.

Another possibility may be the growing danger of floods which compelled the inhabitants to evacuate these cities. The floods, however, could not have accounted entirely for the desertion of these cities, though possibly climatic changes and gradual decline in the material prosperity of the Harappa could have been the contributory causes. There is a remarkable dearth of weapons of defence and war and it is probable that those rich cities with their un-warlike mercantile population, were either ransacked by the invading tribes from the neighbouring hilly regions or that the inhabitants were compelled to migrate to more fertile valleys when dry and arid climatic conditions started prevailing on the Indus valley.

Charred wheat



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
IN WEST PAKISTAN



Published by the Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Education,
Government of Pakistan, Karachi.

